



*George Wythe*

### CHESTERVILLE PLANTATION

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a plantation called Chesterville occupied much of the property that now is NASA's Langley Research Center. This plantation was the ancestral home of George Wythe, first signer of the Declaration of Independence for Virginia. Wythe was a noted law scholar and judge and was the law mentor of Thomas Jefferson. Along with his many other accomplishments, Wythe was the first professor of law in the United States at William and Mary College. Approximately 200 acres of the plantation were acquired by the Wythe family before 1676, and another 204 acres were purchased in 1691. George Wythe inherited the 800-acre plantation upon the death of his brother, Thomas, in 1755, and it was his primary place of residence for many years, although he spent much time at his home in Williamsburg which he inherited in 1775. Chesterville finally passed from Wythe family ownership when George Wythe sold it in 1802. A 350-acre portion of the old plantation was purchased by NASA in 1951 (see map).

The historic significance of this property was recognized by NASA, and a small portion, including the primary house site, was set aside by order of LRC Director Dr. H. J. E. Reid soon after its purchase. Further recognition of the site was forthcoming when a larger area, including an earlier house site and cemetery, was established as a Virginia Historic Landmark on June 29, 1972 (see map). The same area was entered in the National Register of Historic Places on August 14, 1973.